1: Hollis G-5 (ca. 1894-1904) 1905
FL12 Masai FL12



is a man of wealth and importance he may be elected chief[1], in which case he is responsible for the discipline of the warriors and their appearance when summoned to fight, though he does not go to the wars himself. As with most East African tribes an elder's ideal of existence seems to be ease, not unmixed with drunkenness. Proverb No. 64 (p. 249), 'Don't lie with your feet against a post like the father of many sons,' meaning 'Don't give yourself airs,' is a vivid picture of the Masai pater familias taking his ease in the primitive posture of lying on his back with his feet against a post, while his family do all the work for him.

Masai women, unlike the men, are carefully dressed in leather garments, but a rare, and according to our ideas most unbecoming, custom forces them to shave their heads. Before marriage they are circumcised, and signalize their change of state by wearing large circular earrings and necklaces of brass and iron wire. Both girls and women have their legs and arms encased in iron ornaments, so that they can sometimes hardly walk.

This military organization of the Masai made them a most effective body for destructive military operations, and explains not only the predominant position which they acquired in East Africa, but also the respect which they inspired and the extent to which their customs were imitated by other tribes. On the other hand, it probably also is the reason why they never founded any state or polity analogous to the kingdoms of Uganda and Unyoro. The centre of political gravity was not with the elders or chiefs, but with a republic of young men, governed by ideas of military comradeship and desirous only of military glory. Retirement from this band of warriors as a chief was honourable, but seems to have been recognized as a removal to an inferior sphere of activity. The chiefs arranged the details of the raids which the warriors wished to undertake, but their power of compelling them to do anything which they did not wish was very slight.

The nearest approach to a central and superior authority among the Masai is the medicine man or Laibon (more correctly Ol-oiboni; see p. 324, &c.). They all belong to the Kidongi family of the Aiser clan, and are said to be descended from a personage called Ol-le-Mweiya, who came down from heaven and was found by the Aiser sitting on the top of Mount Ngong. This was nine generations ago, the genealogy having been preserved. The influence of the

[1] The chief is elected from the warriors, but leaves their ranks at once and becomes an elder.

9:Fosbrooke G-5 (1936-1948) 1948 FL12 Masai FL12
Kisonko



and alien children; the latter frequently come to be regarded as tribesmen by this process.

First of all a Masai adopts any child born to his wife by anyone other than himself, including those born prior to marriage: in fact a betrothed girl is frequently left in her father's boma until she bears a child. The child of one's own loins is called *oiunoto*, that of another *engera oilaitalak*. No distinction is made between the two, and the latter term is generally used playfully.

If a man has one wife with a number of children, and another who is barren, when the former gives birth to another child, there is a ceremony by which the latter may adopt this child. The adopting mother sits on the after-birth, and pays to the true mother a cow and calf called *nongeya*. She takes over the child as her own ,and it is asserted that by stimulation of the breasts and special food, lactation can be artificially induced, even when the foster-mother has never given birth. The fact that a woman has adopted a child in this manner is seldom referred to afterwards — the child is regarded as though she herself had given birth to it.

In the olden days children were frequently captured in war and adopted into the tribe: such a child is referred to as *ol arnoti lembere*. It was, and still is, not uncommon for a Masai to adopt an alien's child; at times this will occur when the Masai marries the alien's daughter and adopts a younger son; or in time of famine amongst aliens, the Masai may find an abandoned child, or be given one to look after; or he may give some cattle to the alien for the privilege of adopting the child. The use of the word 'purchase' has been deliberately avoided, for neither party looks on the transaction in this light. A son acquired in this manner is called *atabarno*. These last two categories of adoptee can inherit the cattle of their foster-mother's house, whilst their children can inherit the 'gate' like any other Masai.

A peculiar custom of adoption exists amongst the Engidong or laibon's clan. Any Masai, child or adult, can attach himself to a member of the clan, and such person must treat him as a son, giving him cattle, and arranging his circumcision and/or marriage. Such a person is called ol *onito*, as also are the numerous Kikuyu received into the clan. The relationship is terminable at will, the adoptee shaving and departing, but leaving behind everything that he has been given. Though theoretically applicable to the whole clan, such adoptions usually only take place in the laibon's immediate family .

These notes on adoption are by no means full: they may, however, be sufficient to emphasise that it is a mistake to regard the Masai as being racially pure. If they come in time to accept new ideas as readily as they accept new blood, their rapid advancement would be assured.

It is important for a number of reasons to know who holds the purse-strings in a Masai family group, but it is a question to which no definite answer can be given. Rules, where they exist, are seldom followed — in such intimate family matters it is personality that counts.

The cattle which have been allocated to a woman in trust for her children are nominally in her control. The elder looks after the animal

/50 cont./

837
[861]
/footnote 1 cont./ husbands. Babies to whom a woman has given birth from thus living with another man belong to the husband, even though they also call their genitor father.

847
They abort an immature fetus when the woman has been made pregnant by another who is sick or old or feeble. Remedies in the form of a potion are used, which are said to be innoxious during the first two months of pregnancy. After two months of pregnancy they wait for parturition and kill the newborn child.

833
They are accustomed to having intercourse lying on their sides, the woman's upper knee placed over the man's loins. They do not customarily cohabit except at night. They are afraid of coitus in daylight, lest the man's blood transferred to the vessels of his wife would retain nothing but water.

[864]
Boys and girls already begin to practice cohabitation at the age of eight to ten.

514
It is considered extremely shameless to break wind in the presence of women.

## V.

000
Pregnancy. -- Behavior of the pregnant woman and her husband. -- Confinement. -- Festivities in connection with the birth. -- Twins. -- Deformed child. -- Killing newborn children. -- Behavior of the woman in childbed. -- The newborn child. -- Childhood. -- Children's games.

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853
• 183
As soon as the woman feels pregnant, the spouses separate until after the nursing period, which lasts approximately 1 1/2 to 2 years. Another man may not touch the woman during this period, any more than her husband. This stipulation, however, seems to be little

/50 cont./
843 observed, since as a rule a new pregnancy ends the nursing period.
[853] The pregnant woman removes the ornaments that she previously
[783] wore, in order -- as the Masai explain this custom -- not to entice men. During the first five months of pregnancy the woman lives as usual with respect to food and drink. Then she is given a broth of
[262] lung, liver, and kidneys cooked with a bitter-tasting tree bark (2)

2. From Albizzia anthelmintica.

called ol mokotan, and milk, only the latter during the last month. Through this the woman is supposed to become as exceedingly thin as possible, so that the birth will proceed easier. She may not eat the meat of fallen livestock. The husband during this time need not subject himself to any special diet or special acts, but he may not go to war, for it is believed that he would die on the way. Shortly before the delivery the husband may not leave the kraal or its immediate
[732] vicinity. If he should tease a crippled person or mock him because of his infirmity, the awaited child would come into the world af-
844 flicted with the same defect. /51/ For a successful delivery the
[782] pregnant woman prays: 'Ng ai ndaba 'ndubuggu en tiamassi (1)

1. Or en diamassi.

= "God let come out healthy -- the monster," as the unborn child is called. The woman gives birth in her hut, which on this day may be entered only by women and girls. A midwife (eh gaitoijoni, n gaitoijoh) provides or performs the necessary assistance. If the newborn child is a boy, the midwife calls out that blood should be drawn from an ox as food for the woman in childbed; in the other case, from a heifer. Through this the father also learns the sex of the new-
[782] born child. During the birth process the women who are in the hut or standing around it cry to God for help and assistance in shrill, often
845 plaintive voices. The birth of a boy is more desired than that of a
[842] girl, but the greatest joy prevails at the birth of twins, especially if both are boys. In that case the woman often keeps only the first-born child with her, while the second one is nursed by another suitable